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Women's Summit 2017, Interview with Kim Bankston '96 and Karyssa Clark '20

Kim Bankston: This is Kim Bankston, Class of 1996.

Karyssa Clark: My name is Karyssa Clark. I'm class of 2020. So, I am the oldest. It's just me and my brother. My brother is a freshman in high school and I'm a freshman in college. So we're always going to graduate together and like move on together ... that like how our timing works...Right now, I think he is kind of in that growing and getting to know himself phase and that I'm a cool high school basketball, baseball player-

Bankston: Very social kind of (Clark laughing).

Clark: -Yeah. I don't know, I think I'm looking forward to in the future when like we're both, mature, at least he's mature (both laughing) and like wh...when I go home we can just I don't know have cool conversations and be like cool siblings instead of like arguing over the remote -

Bankston: The ones that fight.

Clark: - or something, like yeah.

Bankston: Well and he'll probably start missing you more-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -right now he's still probably in that 'this is awesome' -

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -I get all the attention and all that, but eventually he'll realize that it was much more fun with you around too

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: Well that's exciting.

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: Good. I am one of four children and I'm not a first born which is odd because I think a lot of Wesleyan students are first born. But I am...a twin-

Clark: Oh, cool.

Bankston: -so, I'm actually a third slash fourth I was born first.

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -So I actually say I am the third, but technically I think we were both third. But I was four minutes older than her and I never let her forget it. (Clark laughing) That would be my one piece of advice for someone who has twins is not tell them who was born first because I pretty much held it over her head forever but... so we have an older sister an older brother and then it was the two of us. We tended to excel more academically than our siblings for whatever reason, which is a little bit different than the norm, but we didn't really didn't get along very well when we got to high school just because of general sibling rivalry-

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -and I was always just a little bit better at most things than her and probably was not the most fun to have as a sibling especially as a twin so we went to different colleges. She went to Northern Illinois and I went here and I actually followed my high school boyfriend here and then we broke up within like

Clark: Aww.

Bankston: -6 months (Both laughing) but then I met my husband while I was a student here so we're-

Clark: Worked out.

Bankston: -here 20 years later so it's worked out fabulously. And what's interesting is my sister and I are both nurse- we're both nurse practitioners too so we went different schools and but still ended up doing the same job we're identical twins.

Clark: That's so cool!

Bankston: Yeah, so that's kind of where it is with that. But ...all right let's move onto the next one. Who has been kindest to you in your life?

Clark: I chose this one knowing, that my mom has been the kindest to me. I love her; she's like my best friend she really is-

Bankston: Sweet!

Clark: -and ...I don't know she's, she's just kind to absolutely everyone, like she just loves and has love for everyone and I don't know I always look up to her in like every part and every piece of her life 'cause I want to be just like her you know-

Bankston: Do you?

Clark: Yeah, yeah she's like really great so.

Bankston: That's fabulous. How does she show her kindness to you? Is it with words or is it how she acts towards you?

Clark: Yeah it's with words and support and ... like words of affirmation and ... a...and also her...her advice and stuff like that like... I don't know let' say there's a situation and she, she can she knows how to come at it so it's like. She just gives the best advice like she's very wise and she knows multiple perspectives so she comes from multiple perspectives which I think is better than someone who kind of comes of either just their own or just one.

Bankston: Is she very calm? She sounds like she would be a very calm person.

Clark: Yeah, yeah.

Bankston: (Bankston laughing) That's great!

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: Now did you go through like a little rough patch in your teens where you were a little rebellious towards her or-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -any during that?

Clark: Yeah, I'm pretty sure yeah but I feel like I was most rebellious towards my dad because we're both very stubborn I think-

Bankston: You're a lot like your dad?

Clark: -especially growing up. Yeah. So... my mom was kind of the one I went to when like after I you know got in an argument with my dad you know what I mean. I don't th... We definitely had a few points where it was like my rebellious phase

Bankston: Growing pains. Normal growing pains.

Clark: (Both laughing) Yeah growing pains.... So yeah, she's the best

Bankston: That's wonderful. That's wonderful! I can probably pick 8 million people who are kindest to me in my life. So I don't know if I'm gonna go into that one.

Clark: Oh yeah yeah, yeah!

Bankston: That's way too many life...longer of a life. So let's go to how you like to be remembered. I'm curious about that one at your young age.

Clark: I would like to be remembered as someone who was kind to everyone and welcoming and someone who you could come to you know with anything and not be judged ... or not feel demeaned or you were like condescended upon or anything like that. So yeah, I think just being

remembered as someone, who just tried her best to be a light to all different kinds of people so.

Bankston: It sounds like you're describing your mom. (Clark laughing) That's who you wanna be like-

Clark: (Clark laughing) That's true, yeah.

Bankston: -Am I right? It's funny how we always want to be who we don't feel like we are necessarily even though you're probably are a lot more like her than you even realize already but-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -That's wonderful.

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: How would I like to be remembered? One thing I always initially I think having a twin I always wanted to be remembered for just being me and not as the one with the twin so I always wanted to delineate myself for that but again I work in a helping profession you know in the nursing field that ... always want people to feel that I'm genuine when I talk with them or provide them the same care I would with family member and want to feel very authentic and caring and all those same sorts of things. I think that right now with the ages my children are now, especially my two teenagers I'm envious of the way you feel about your mom right now and I hoping that someday they'll start feeling with you know...I'm sure there's time definitely when they do, but right now there's some of that "you're so embarrassing -

Clark: Oh yeah!

Bankston: -just stay in the car when you pick me up"-

Clark: Ohh.

Bankston: -and then I say "Oh, if you think I'm one of the parents you should be embarrassed of and if you are I am totally going to do a better job of embarrassing you because I could have a lot more fun right now." (Both laughing) So I think I look forward in having all my other girls I look forward to having those relationships with them later and down the road and seeing how impactful you could be to their children you know because you'll take what you've learned from your mother and pass that on to future generations of your own as well. -

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -So I think that's very, very important.

Clark: It's funny that you mention that because my well my mom she's a bilingual para...paraprofessional at my high school-

Bankston: Ah!

Clark: -so it was funny because you know my freshman year I kind of I didn't have to do high school alone let's say I mean there was definitely space-

Bankston: She was just-

Clark: -she was always kind of there and so it's like I know it was funny because if I ever forgot a field trip or a permission slip it's like some people it's like, "Oh well too bad you can't go" and I'm like "Ah let me just run upstairs really fast, like I can get it." So it's funny because she posted on Facebook that she was wearing a dress and gym shoes because you know (Clark laughing) I don't know I didn't approve of it let's just say that, but she said that my brother because my brother goes there-

Bankston: Oh he's there now.

Clark: Yeah, she said that he said he told her to wait in the car for five minutes while he gets out-

Bankston: So no one associated them together!

Clark: -Yeah just because of her outfit. So yeah-

Bankston: So you understand.

Clark: -It was very funny.

Bankston: That its part of the age I think because my second one she and I are a lot alike and so we battle but she's a freshman the same age I think tends to do that you're still finding your way in a new group of people and trying to figure where you fit in socially. You know have you have an older sibling who was a very high achiever, I think that's something where you feel like "I'm never going to be as smart as them" or whatever. So I think that puts some challenges on the next one in line. All right, incoming students at IWU, what would you want to say to them?

Bankston: You're just recently an incoming student so it's-

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: -probably a little challenging for you.

Clark: ... I'd say find a community, get involved, and find a balance between your involvement. I feel like that's something that's funny because you know people always tell you get up get involved it'll make the school smaller and this this and this and that's really good but I was also kind of never told about that balance part so I got too involved-

Bankston: Not overcommitting.

Clark: (laughing) -Yeah so I totally overly committed ... but I don't regret it because that was like a lesson it was kind of a like a lesson that I'll take with me-

Bankston: It is! It is!

Clark: - not to be afraid to say no or offend people if you say no I'm going to pass, I've got too much on my plate so just kind of doing ... what's best for you because it's your education experience.

Bankston: I always I give that advice a lot to women-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -I see as patients. That it's an important skill to learn how to say no because a lot of times I think when we say yes to things out of that feeling of duty and they may not find full enjoyment in what they're saying yes to but they feel like maybe no one else will step up and take their spot. But saying no feels fabulous-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -it feels really good and you don't even have to give a reason.

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -Just say well sorry can't do that.

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: So it really does feel good and then I find you can be more present and put more energy into the other things that we do say yes to that we really feel more passionate about. -

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: So I...I encourage people I usual...usually say try to find two things to say no to over the next four weeks -

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -and then just see how it makes you feel it actually is just very freeing.

Clark: That is...

Bankston: -and also don't like tell someone maybe and, and then when you really want to tell them no don't tell them maybe and then sit there and mull over it and think I should I shouldn't I

should I shouldn't when you really wanted to say no if you just say no right off the bat then you save all that emotional energy and you don't have to think about stew about it and feel like you're being pushed when you could just say no. -

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: So I like it that you're already and I mean I don't like it that you felt that but I do like it that you're recognizing it that's important that's a skill and everyone always strives for that balance when even though in reality there probably is no true balance ever there's always going to be a little lopsided one way or the other but, still just striving to make sure that you're meeting all the needs that you need to without running yourself into exhaustion too. -

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: -So well that's fabulous!

Clark: Thank you!

Bankston: All right what else should we talk about? How about this one? I'm curious for you-

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -when in life have you felt most alone?

Bankston: Have you ever felt that way? You maybe haven't. You had one sibling and a close relationship with your mother so... -

Clark: Yeah so...I feel like growing (clear voice) growing up I felt pretty alone just because I don't know I was just I was very unique and had like a unique personality that you know wasn't necessarily the one that everybody had you know what I mean. So it was like I mean growing up I kind of found my niche in like theatre-

Bankston: Oh good!

Clark: -and expressing myself creatively and all that kind of stuff but I don't know kind of growing up it was like ... I don't know, I don't think people were as accepting of like just people that were different from them. So, I think when I was younger I felt alone quite a bit actually.

Bankston: I think that when people have a lot of stratification to them, a lot of different talents, and feelings and abilities people get intimidated by that and they don't know how to accept that. You know I think that probably especially junior high tends to be a very challenging time for girls -

Clark: Mhm.

Bankston: -because they are physically maturing differently and then emotionally some are still very mature and some are already getting things more. But that's when the exclusion start happening and if you don't fit into their mold of what you're supposed to act like this, and dress like this,-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -and talk like this and you know flirting with boys like this then that's and if you're not doing that it's like they almost push you-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -to the side and then you feel like well there's no reason they should push me to the side "I'm completely normal" you know-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston-so I think that that's not a problem for especially very intelligent talented people to feel that way and I...I often tell my girls that I would rather they be the ones to be the outspoken one or to make a decision different than the others in their group because it's going to set them apart and show strengths especially when it comes to standing up for others that maybe wouldn't stand up for themselves with not necessarily with bullying but just some people who are weaker personalities you'd probably had some in your school and it wouldn't be people make fun of them or they would just exclude them from activities and it's always better to be the person to say "Hey, did you have a good day?" or something light. It doesn't mean you have to pull at them or fight them-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -so I think junior high years-

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: -for girls in general tends to be a big feeling of alone yes and I think my junior high probably when I felt the most alone has been more in my adult years just because I always had my twin so I didn't feel really alone feeling like I did-if anything I wanted some space but I think sometimes in your adult years you feel that a little bit more and transitions and I made some career transitions only after grad school there was really no one else that was even in my friend group that was doing all the things that I was with having a bunch of kids and working full time and grad school. Now that I'm done with grad school I don't feel alone anymore. All right what else?

Clark: What about "what are the most important lessons you've learned in your life?"

Bankston: Okay all right do you want to start with that?

Clark: Sure

Bankston: Besides saying no?

Clark: Yeah ... I think the most important lesson I've learned is...I'd say to show love for everyone. It was because I feel like growing up I mean I don't know that's always something that I've appreciated but that's also something that I've not shown you know what I mean so an...and it's kind of those experiences where I found it hard to show love or when I didn't or chose not to, you know what I mean... I don't know, those are some of the times where I wasn't proud of, you know, who I was and stuff like that... I think just showing love and respect for everyone that you meet and its easier said than done but just trying to make a conscious effort to kind of just be the best person that you can be and maybe that does mean like you know stopping some things or you know saying no to some clubs or whatever so that you can have more-

Bankston: Right, right.

Clark: -yourself time because sometimes you know that would stem from being stressed out like you could be so stressed out or be so overwhelmed but like someone says something and you snap or something like that. -

Bankston: Right, over something that you normally wouldn't.

Clark: -Yeah so just self-maintenance and...

Bankston: Kind of like a self-regulation-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -like trying to make sure you're staying within the realm. One of my favorite sayings, I say it to my girls almost all the time, "Is...Is it going to change the world?" You know when you think about something that you're stressing out about in life or something that you are edge about, is it going to change the world if you do this well or don't do this well or participate or don't participate is it really going to change anything, and often the answer is no-

Clark: Yeah

Bankston: -so trying to just let that emotional energy instead of letting it drain you just letting go of it you know because of a lot of time it's not going to make a huge difference in the long run.

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: So what kind of clubs are you in or what things?

Clark: So I am (clicking tongue)...let's start okay, I am in hall government-

Bankston: Ok.

Clark: -so I'm the social media coordinator for my hall-

Bankston: Oh cool!

Clark: Sounds fancy-

Bankston: That's okay, perfect.

Clark: (Karyssa laughs) -We have meetings once every other week and they're like 2 minutes long (laughing) but ... I am in the beginning of the year I was on the homecoming committee which I loved, it was like the first thing I did here that I was like ok, I see a poster I'm actually gonna go to something I'm actually going to do it. -

Bankston: Yeah.

Clark: -So I did that I loved that. I loved the planning aspect of everything and then I...let's see I'm in the National Society of Leadership and Success... I oh I'm President of the Makers club started an RSO.

Bankston: Oh what's that?

Clark: So... the vision of that club is to kind of have a space where students can learn about multiple different art fields. So like the way I'm thinking of setting it up is through this in like 10 units over the course of the school year. Where let's say unit 1 we're gonna do glass making so like we'll bring in the glass making or kiln professor to teach for like 20 minutes, have some hands on experience maybe work on it for another meeting after that and move on to ceramics.

Bankston: So is this a new club?

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: Wow, -

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -and you started it?

Clark: Yeah (Clark laughing) so, it's in the baby stages-

Bankston: That's great!

Clark: -and we still got to plan and stuff, but yeah I like I just I don't know just cause I love well number one, I love art and creativity and stuff like that but I just don't, I just don't have time to take all the art classes that I-

Bankston: Right, right.

Clark: -want to so this is not meant to like replace anything

Bankston: No but you can, some exposure -

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: -and a little bit of an outlet.

Clark: Yeah, to 3D printing or graphic design, computer science and all these creative I don't know fields that you can kind of explore and dabble in.

Bankston: Yeah.

Clark: We'll have like events and sales and stuff like that so.

Bankston: See now that sounds like something you want to throw your energy into. Hence then saying no to some of the other things.

Clark: Yeah so, that's been that's kind of my focus right now.

Bankston: Good.

Clark: And then let's see, oh I go to DRL on Thursday which I try my best which is Death Resurrection Life, it's a Christian organization on campus. I was involved with Cornerstone church for a while and they're small for the first semester mainly. Let's see, I was a Kappa Delta (Clark laughing) up until yesterday -

Bankston: Oh, see that was a good decision that you made.

Clark: -so I mean I wasn't initiated or anything I just accepted the bid and started kind of -

Bankston: Seeing what it was like.

Clark: -yeah and then just decided that whew... I'm trying to do so much, I'm already in so much would I rather really invest in what I am doing now first and if something you know and if things kind of open up later on then maybe but because I'm going to Honduras this summer on a mission trip uh huh a mission trip and then...

Bankston: Through here or on a trip?

Clark: Through here.

Bankston: Through here, I think I had gotten an email about it that they're letting some other people...

Clark: Yeah, and then I'm studying abroad in London next semester.

Bankston: Great.

Clark: So, there's just a lot of really good things but it's still a lot that I'm trying to kind of balance.

Bankston: Yes.

Clark: So, I didn't think it was wise to keep adding things on to my list

Bankston: I think that was a very mature decision.

Clark: Thanks!

Bankston: I really do.

Clark: It was something that I just had to say "ok I really love you guys but I yeah I don't think I'm going to go through with it."

Bankston: But we can still be friends-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -with all those people and not have to worry about some of things that they have to do and you'll still be able to do the things you love to do. So tell me about the London thing?

Clark: Oh so ok... I saw posters at like the beginning you know of the semester and all that, and like some people kind of came around to the rooms and I was like "Uh, I don't know maybe, maybe you know I'll join or something like that and then so I then I was like you know I'm going to apply because I don't know it's so cool the way its set up is, you know the city is... classroom you're in a classroom like 25% of the time and you know out and about 75% of the time it's like I don't know. Well, living in London specifically is very expensive like in the city which is where we will be and so like just all the perks of it which maybe later on down the road will be more difficult like let's say fresh graduate "Oh let me go to London for a-"

Bankston: That can be financially challenging.

Clark: -Yeah, so....

Bankston: So are there a big group of Wesleyan students that got in?

Clark: I don't know. I ...I applied, got in and then got sent a letter and I don't really know of any other students who are in it now but ... Yeah I think, I think we'll have a meeting and then I'll get to see kind of everyone who's in it -

Bankston: See who's there.

Clark: -who's there but I don't know anyone personally who's in it right now.

Bankston: Is it the first year they've done it?

Clark: No, no they've done it a while. So this year I think ... yeah, yeah this fall theme's is censorship and all throughout history art so well be going to museums and stuff theatres so we'll go on the weekend to a bunch of theatre productions and just censorship and literature as well and like London history so...

Bankston: Wow! That will be really cool. One of my nieces went here too Illinois Wesleyan too and she did that Oxford Exchange program for one year and really liked that but I think that's different-

Clark: Yeah, I'm only going for a semester.

Bankston: Ok, so I was like I don't really know how things...But I know she really enjoyed it too when she was living over there and expense wise-

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -same thing it was much easier to do as a student as opposed to a new graduate living. Still trying to figure out financially paying off loans-

Clark: Yeah!

Bankston: -and living expenses and all that so-

Clark: Exactly!

Bankston: -well sounds great.

Clark: Yeah, there's a lot.

Bankston: Which is a lot?

Clark: I'm just learning to balance and manage and prioritize like that's the biggest one prioritize. Like if this were to move around to like no... then London is not an option for me Honduras not really an option-

Bankston: Right, those are the things not being taken off the table?

Clark: -yeah makers club no that's something I want to do and leave my mark here that's awesome. So yeah.

Bankston: Well I think that...I'm very impressed because a lot of people don't, you give into the social pressures of –

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -what you think others think you should be doing or if you worry too much about what other people say then you may not make the choices that really feel like of part who you truly are so –

Clark: Yeah.

Bankston: -you should be very proud.

Clark: Thanks.

Bankston: Were you able to talk with your mom about all that too?

Clark: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Bankston: Do you talk with her almost every day?

Clark: Yes, and especially when I was like trying to figure out what to drop. She was like, “you're going to have to drop something you know this is not working out” you know because I also work I'm a desk aid so- and I love that job.

Bankston: Yeah, those are good jobs.

Clark: Yeah and you can be paid to do your homework at desk and stuff like that. I mean of course you have other duties too that you fulfill

Bankston: Right, but still it's time commitment that you have to budget in so.

Clark: Yeah, so... yeah I call her a lot (Clark laughing).

Bankston: Do you? Well I bet she loves that though. You guys will continue to be really close over the years. Ah, well great!